

## Topics: Vietnam Options—One General's Viewpoint

By MARK W. CLARK

CHARLESTON, S. C.

As Commander of United Nations forces in Korea, I signed the Armistice on July 27, 1953, which terminated the fighting. After the signing ceremony I said:

"I cannot find it in me to exult in this hour. Rather it is a time for prayer, that we may succeed in our difficult endeavor to turn this armistice to the advantage of mankind. If we extract hope from this occasion, it must be diluted with recognition that our salvation requires unrelaxing vigilance."

I was thankful the armistice had ended the killing. But when I signed the armistice I knew it was not over, that the struggle against Communism would not be over in my lifetime. We won this skirmish in the sense that, for the first time, Communism failed in direct armed aggression.

We lost in the sense that the enemy remained undefeated and even more powerful and threatening than before. I was convinced, as we stopped the blood-letting, as was my predecessor, General MacArthur, that in our first test of arms with the Communists, we should have defeated them. Had we done so, we would not have become involved in Vietnam.

From long experience in negotiating with Communists, I have found that they are impressed when we negotiate from strength. But when we negotiate from weakness, or when we reveal a willingness to appease, the Communists exploit and humiliate us.

### United States Options

When the Communists find they cannot accomplish their objectives militarily and are punished, they move to the conference table. They consider negotiation an extension of the war, of getting what they want through the diplomatic route.

As I see it, the President has three options open to him:

(1) *Withdraw from Vietnam* as some advocate. If we do this, 40,000 men will have died in vain, and a vacuum will be created in Southeast Asia which the enemy will immediately exploit. If we abandon our friends in Asia, we will later have to face up to the Communists in a more costly war. We would be buying a temporary and political pause from the fighting by mortgaging the lives of our young people.

(2) *Intensify the war.* From a purely military point of view, this is what should be done. However, the intensification of

the war at the present time is politically unsound. The war has been fought too long with political considerations overriding sound military judgment. Halting the bombing of North Vietnam was a great mistake, which gave a big advantage to the enemy.

I know that in Korea, when I was finally given permission to break off negotiations at Panmunjom and politically imposed restrictions were removed, I then attacked every worthwhile enemy target in North Korea, and the war turned in our favor. The enemy soon requested that negotiations be resumed. He had been hurt, he found he could not win militarily, so he moved back to the conference table. Soon the armistice was agreed upon and the fighting stopped.

(3) *Vietnamization of the war.* This is the policy adopted by my Government, which I support, under present conditions.

### Training Program

When I was the Commander in Korea, I visited the French then fighting in Vietnam. I urged them to start a training program for the South Vietnamese, similar to the successful one we were using for Koreans. This was not accepted.

The best way for America to

extricate herself from Vietnam with honor is to train the South Vietnam Army and to equip it with modern weapons. As these troops assume responsibilities which are now ours, our soldiers should be brought home as the military situation permits, remembering that we still have some 50,000 troops in Korea seventeen years after the armistice. The same situation will no doubt occur in Vietnam, where some ground forces will be required, along with air, naval and logistics units, for a long time to come.

We may have to abandon the Vietnamization approach should the enemy fail to respond in due time to our efforts to end the war. In case we must later escalate the war, I believe that by resolute military action on our part, the enemy could be hurt to the point that he would move to fruitful peace talks.

The sure way to maintain the peace is to be strong militarily and unafraid politically, and to let the enemy know that we will use that strength as necessary to maintain the security of the United States.

*General Mark W. Clark was U. S. Army Commander in Italy and U.N. commander in Korea. He is president emeritus of The Citadel, South Carolina.*

PHILADELPHIA BULLETIN 22 FEBRUARY 1970

## Nixon Appears to Be Rebuffing Red Offer of Peace in Vietnam

The author of this article is a former Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, and is presently professor of government at Columbia University.

By ROGER HILSMAN

New York — President Nixon is rebuffing a Communist offer of a more-or-less immediate Vietnam peace on terms that many Americans might find perfectly acceptable.

This is the puzzling, and unhappy, conclusion I have reached after private contacts with North Vietnamese diplomats and after studying both public and private signals which the Communists have been sending out in recent months.

Other Communist watchers, including W. Averell Harriman, the former American peace negotiator in Paris, have come to the same conclusion.

### Withdrawals Scheduled

Meanwhile, there is increasing evidence that "Vietnamization" of the war is going forward at a much slower pace than is generally expected and believed.

The best information in Washington is that President Nixon plans to reduce American forces in Vietnam very

gradually in 1970 to about 280,000 to 300,000 men. Then, in 1971, he plans only a relatively small further reduction, to about 250,000 men.

In 1972, the election year, he will bring home another 50,000 to 75,000 men, and just before the election he can announce a decision to withdraw another 50,000 to 75,000.

### Shrewd Politics

This is shrewd politics, but the consequences are great. The monetary cost of the war under Nixon program will be high — something between \$50 and \$100 billion. Much more important, however, is the foreseeable cost of the program in American lives.

Although the President's plan will mean a reduction in casualties, we can expect another 5,000 to 10,000 Americans to be killed in the three-year period. And it might be many more than that.

For the fact is that the Nixon plan is a decision to continue the war in Vietnam, not to end it. When all the reductions he is reportedly planning have been made, there will still be between 100,000 and 150,000 American troops in Vietnam.

### Not the Only Way

And this means that, although it may not come for a year or even two, eventually

the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong will be forced into launching a major offensive aimed directly at the Americans.

This snail's-pace Vietnamization is not the only course available to Mr. Nixon. For more than a year, the Communist side has been sending what the Communist-watchers call signals. Sometimes these signals are direct and straightforward, but private — put out, for example, not officially, but in one of the "tea-break" conversations of the Paris negotiations. Others are contained in subtleties of language that laymen find confusing, but which are meaningful to professional Communist-watchers.

An example is the letter from the late Ho Chi Minh to President Nixon written just before Ho's death last September. In the past, Communist practice had been to describe the so-called "ten points" of the NFL peace proposal as the only possible solution.

### Shift No Accident

But, in his letter, Ho refers to them as "a logical and reasonable basis for the settlement of the Vietnamese problem." If past experience with the Communists is any guide, the shift from "the" to "a"

and from words like "only possible solution" to "basis for a settlement," is not accidental.

In the opinion of a number of professional Communist-watchers, what these signals add up to is the following offer:

—No election, but an old-fashioned political deal setting up a coalition government including representatives of all political factions, Communist and non-Communist;

—Although their propaganda still calls for immediate total withdrawal of American troops, privately they have indicated the withdrawal could be phased over two or three years;

### Cambodia's Integrity

—Postponement of the reunification of North and South Vietnam for a period of between five and ten years;

—International guarantees of the territorial integrity of Laos and Cambodia.

One interesting point is that the Communist side told Harriman, when he was chief negotiator in Paris, that after the war was over, they would like to exchange ambassadors with Western nations, including the United States.

Pointing to the fact that they have friendly relations with the French in spite of their long struggle for independence, they said that they would like to do the same with the United States.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

**REBUFFING RED OFFER**

What is particularly unusual is how far the Communist side has gone in their public signals, making concessions that for reasons of negotiating tactics they would normally reserve for later use.

The most startling of all was the public statement by the Paris representative of the NLF, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, on November 14. The NLF has refused to do business with the Thieu-Ky government, and everyone in Washington supposed they would deal only with some pliable pro-Communist.

But Mrs. Binh stated that if General "Big" Minh became the head of a peace cabinet in Saigon, "we are ready to begin conversations with him." Although "Big" Minh has hinted that he is willing to negotiate with the Communists, he is certainly neither pro-Communist nor a dove. On the contrary, he is the most senior and popular general in the South Vietnamese army, and the leader of the 1963 coup against the hated Diem regime.

**Willingness to Deal**

A willingness to deal with Minh is an extraordinary concession, since he could form a non-Communist government far more representative and popular than the present Thieu-Ky government, and hence one that would carry much more weight in negotiations and in any coalition government that followed.

Although there is some difference of opinion about the exact nature of the coalition government the Communists are proposing, there is no doubt that they are offering a deal.

Harriman, the most prestigious Communist-watcher of them all, is convinced that if President Johnson had accepted the advice given him in the summer of 1968, a peace settlement could have been achieved as early as September, 1968. And he thinks Mr. Nixon has the same sort of opportunity.

**Interesting Point**

The interesting point is why the Communist side is offering such a deal.

It is very doubtful that Hanoi and the NLF have decided they won't win. Although they may be poorly informed on some aspects of American politics and excessively suspicious, there is reason to believe that they can read the political signs in the United States well enough to know that President Nixon will find it impossible to return to a policy of escalation in Vietnam and that even keeping American air and artillery forces there may become politically difficult for him.

In the second place, there is no reason to believe either that the Communist side doubts that they will prevail

over the Saigon government once the United States departs or that they are wrong in that judgment.

**Washington Optimism**

Currently there is an upsurge of optimism in Washington about the ability of the Vietnamese to fend for themselves because the statistical indicators are favorable. The trouble is that the gains highlighted by the statistical indicators are very fragile, and most of them have been possible only because the North Vietnamese forces have pulled back for the political purposes of signalling a willingness to negotiate and in response to Mr. Nixon's reduction of American troops.

The North Vietnamese can dramatically reverse all these indicators by a decision to launch an offensive, or less dramatically by a decision to attack the pacification effort itself.

So why are Hanoi and the NLF so interested in a settlement based on a coalition government, if things will eventually go their way no matter what? Why don't they simply settle down themselves to a long-haul, low-cost war? I think it is because of Communist China.

**They're Determined**

Hanoi has so far maintained its independence of China, even to the extent of going to Paris for the negotiations against Chinese advice and in the face of some very concrete measures of a punitive nature that China took against them. And it seems perfectly clear that the North Vietnamese are fiercely determined to continue to maintain their independence.

If the motive for their signals is related to their fear of China, this would explain a number of things.

In the first place, a negotiated settlement, formally signed by 13 or 14 signatories (depending on whether China does or does not sign) would act as a potent political deterrent to China whether or not its provisions include teeth in the form of international police forces or the like.

The Chinese have other goals than Vietnam, and they are political enough to understand the consequences for those other goals of a blatant violation of an agreement signed by so many of the world's powers, both Communist and non-Communist.

**A Western Stake**

Second, if North Vietnam maintained friendly relations with Western powers it would provide a Western stake in Vietnam and a Western presence there that would also act as a deterrent to China. A phased withdrawal of American troops would make the point even more dramatically, and a postponed reunification would be both a concession and a way of provid-

ing time for healing wounds and thus eventually presenting both China and the world with a Vietnam that is more truly united.

And if the motive is China, there are also several implications that are important to the United States. It means for example, that there is little basis for Mr. Nixon's fear of a blood bath following the installation of a coalition government — a fear that was the foundation stone of the Vietnamization policy laid down in his November 3 speech.

If the Communist side does in the end become dominant in a coalition government, some individuals will undoubtedly be tried as war criminals — such as the secret police chief who shot a suspect in front of an American camera.

**Settle Old Scores**

Also, in some villages, where conditions are chaotic, there will undoubtedly be individuals, both Communist and non-Communist, who will take the opportunity to settle old scores.

But if the Communists want to maintain their independence of China, they will want not a blood bath but a reconciliation. For if China is a problem, they will need to develop support among non-Communist elements of the population as well as Communist.

For the same reason, the Vietnamese Communists have a stake in maintaining the sympathies of the outside world, non-Communist as well as Communist, which any sort of blood bath would jeopardize — and certainly so if Western ambassadors were present in the country. For all these reasons, it seems likely that the official policy will be one of no reprisals.

**What Professors Said**

The expectations of Vietnamese who would be prime targets of any reprisal are instructive. Last year I asked 12 different non-Communist or anti-Communist Vietnamese professors and university officials what they would do if the Paris negotiations resulted in a coalition government and sessions of self-criticism-dominated — would they go to Paris? To the United States? Each one answered that he expected not only to remain in Vietnam, but to continue in his university post.

"But what about reprisals?" I would ask in some amazement.

"Oh," the reply went, "there will be some harassment and sessions of self-criticism. But I expect to go on teaching, and to draw my salary."

What all this suggests is that although one may not be inclined to trust what the Communists are saying, there seems to be solid political

24 FEBRUARY 1970

## Envoy Pouch Curbed by Cambodia

Associated Press

Cambodia has asked all diplomatic missions in Phnom Penh to refrain from sending or receiving diplomatic pouches between Feb. 15 and March 7 unless they agree to inspection of the pouches by Cambodian authorities.

State Department officials said yesterday that the request was made in a circular letter Feb. 15 to all embassies in the Cambodian capital. Should a foreign government agree to the inspection, the pouches would be opened in the presence of Cambodian authorities, the circular letter said.

State Department officials declined to comment on the legality of the step or to say whether the U.S. government has protested the restriction.

Officials privately said they understood the Cambodian government is trying to stop the import of counterfeit Cambodian currency. There has been concern in Phnom Penh for some time that certain unidentified Communist diplomatic missions might be using the pouch for such smuggling.

pressure on them on which one can rely. It is these pressures which lead them to want a settlement rather than simply to wait for Vietnam to fail in their laps.

**Number of Misgivings**

As for the Nixon policy of Vietnamization, experienced observers have a number of misgivings. The most important is doubt that it will work. It hardly seems realistic to believe that Saigon can prevail against the combined strength of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese alone.

**We Should Ask**

Admittedly, it might turn out that in spite of their signals, what the Communist side has in mind for a coalition government is unacceptable.

If so, the Nixon policy may be a better policy than the other possibilities. But the point is that we will never know if we don't take at least the first step — that of asking the Communist side in Paris to be specific.

It is this that Mr. Nixon refuses to do. And if the professional Communist-watchers are right in believing that the Communists are offering an acceptable deal, his rejection of their proposal may be as tragic as the decision to make Vietnam an American war in the first place. c 1970.